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Minnesota Eats Out: An Illustrated History

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time friends and colleagues in touching and sentimental ways. He was and remains a strong promoter of Iowa, the Des Moines area in particular. Like many wealthy Americans, once he had made his fortune, he looked around to find ways to give back to his community and his nation.

This suggests my one criticism of the book, although it should not discourage anyone from reading it. I wish the author had drawn broader implications from the life of his subject. Politics is full of demagogues, most of whom couldn't succeed in the real world with a road map, who expend considerable energy vilifying corporations and successful entrepreneurs such as Ruan. Surely, some of Ruan's run-ins with the *Des Moines Register* reflected a bit of that attitude on its part.

Any fair reading of the evidence surely suggests that Ruan succeeded for the right reasons. The bottom line is: he provided a better product at a more reasonable price than his competitors. Like Andrew Carnegie many years before, Ruan realized that if he kept costs down through higher productivity, profits would take care of themselves. He regularly replaced his trucks as better and more reliable equipment came along. He found innovative ways to serve his customers, and those innovations helped make life a little better for the rest of us as consumers. He was a leader in promoting safety and courtesy on the highways, an effort that was both profitable and the right thing to do. At the end of the day, he and his family have done more for their community than the most sanctimonious do-gooder.

Not everything John Ruan touched turned to gold. There were a few failures, particularly as he diversified beyond his original trucking business. But he accomplished much and represents what is positive about American capitalism. About that, the author should have left no doubt.

Minnesota Eats Out: An Illustrated History, by Kathryn Strand Koutsky and Linda Koutsky with recipes by Eleanor Ostman. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2003. ix, 213 pp. Illustrations, recipes, indexes. \$34.95 cloth.

Reviewer Keith A. Sculle is head of Research and Education for the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency. He is coauthor (with John Jakle) of *Fast Food: Roadside Restaurants in the Automobile Age* (1999), *The Motel in America* (1996), *The Gas Station in America* (1995), and, most recently, *Signs in America's Auto Age: Signatures of Landscape and Place* (2004).

Effervescent, colorful, evocative, delicious in its own ways—a jubilant celebration of many of Minnesota's places to dine out in the days before

franchised chains routinely dominated the experience—*Minnesota Eats Out* is an attractive book. Readers will perhaps recall restaurants such as The Covered Wagon (interior motif ranch house, naturally) in St. Paul and Minneapolis, F. W. Woolworth or other five-and-dimes' lunch counters, The Emporium and Schuneman's department store dining rooms in St. Paul, and, if they could afford luxurious train rides, Pullman diners. Readers have the chance to revisit those dining establishments or learn about them for the first time. All of this proceeds with visual aids, including restaurant collectibles such as matchbook covers, monogrammed restaurant ware, menus, postcards, and historical photographs. Throughout the visual display, accounts of particular restaurants, restaurant owners, and their groups of customers add to the entertainment. The authors' extensive backgrounds make this treat possible. Kathryn Strand Koutsky, a designer, understands the architecture and interior design that were essential to selecting the book's memorable restaurants. Linda Koutsky, a designer and columnist, showcases some of her collection of restaurant ware in the volume. Equally significant, Eleanor Osman, author of a very popular cookbook and longtime food writer for the *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, assembles the recipes from the restaurants that, on various pages, add gustatory promise for readers after they finish the book. It should long remain a staple among popular readers. This book is fun.

Cedar County: A Memoir of Iowa, by Steve Sanger. New York: Writers Club Press, 2003. v, 208 pp. \$16.95 paper.

Reviewer Jeffrey A. Kaufmann is professor of history and head of the Social Sciences Department at Muscatine Community College. He is editor of the *Cedar County Historical Review* and has written extensively about one-room schools and other topics related to rural Iowa.

Steve Sanger's book vacillates between boyhood memories of the year he spent on a Cedar County farm in 1945 and his 13-month sojourn in Tipton, the county seat, in 1988–1989. He also writes extensively of his aging parents, trips away from Cedar County, and various personal and romantic interludes. His more recent time in the county revolved around formal interviews of farmers, business partners, ministers, and local officials and informal observations of people at a small restaurant. There is much detail about his friendship with an Irish trainee reporter and a couple who ran a Victorian bed-and-breakfast.

Sanger admits that his project changed from "oral history to personal odyssey" (154). In rich detail, he describes conversations in local bars, his lonely existence in a trailer court, and beautiful rural land-

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